

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----079201 120812Z /10

R 111010Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4366  
INFO USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 13482

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SREF  
UUBJECT: LOCAL SETTLEMENT OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN THAILAND

REF: A) GENEVA 6801 B) BANGKOK 13013 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: THE RTG HAS GIVEN NO SIGN THAT WE WILL  
GET AN EARLY RESPONSE TO THE VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFER  
TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR LOCAL SETTLEMENT OF  
INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. THE UNHCR SHOULD BE THE FOCUS OF ANY  
INTERNATIONAL AID TO THAI PLANS FOR LOCAL SETTLEMENT.  
THE VICE PRESIDENT'S COMMITMENT THAT THE US WOULD TAKE  
15-20,000 REFUGEES FROM THAILAND DURING THE ENSUING  
YEAR HAS CONVINCED THE THAI THAT, WITH POTENTIAL ACCELERATED  
DEPARTURES FOR THIRD COUNTRIES PERHAPS OVER THE NEXT  
SEVERAL YEARS, THEY ARE CORRECT IN PLANNING FOR LOCAL  
SETTLEMENT OF ONLY 20,000 REFUGEES. GIVEN THESE  
CONSTRAINTS, WE NEVERTHELESS SUGGEST SOME APPROACHES  
TO LOCAL SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFER OF \$1 - 2 MILLION TO  
ASSIST RTG LONG RANGE PLANNING FOR THE REFUGEE PROBLEMS  
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INCLUDING LOCAL SETTLEMENT IN THAILAND, RECEIVED ONLY  
BRIEF DISCUSSION DURING THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT HERE.  
THE THAI HAVE MADE NO SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE TO THAT  
OFFER AND HAVE NOT TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO FOLLOW UP  
WITH US ON THIS SUBJECT. RTG WORKING LEVELS HAVE INDICATED  
THAT, IN CONTRAST TO WARM APPRECIATION FOR THE  
INDICATION WE WILL TAKE 15-20,000 REFUGEES FROM THAILAND,

SENIOR RTG LEVELS WERE MILDLY ANNOYED BY OUR OFFER TO PROVIDE \$1-2 MILLION FOR WHICH THEY HAD NOT BEEN PREPARED IN ADVANCE. APPARENTLY RTG OFFICERS BELIEVE THAT WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO GAIN MAXIMUM MILEAGE FOR OUR OWN PURPOSES (I.E. LOCAL SETTLEMENT) OUT OF WHAT TO THEM WAS A VERY MINOR GESTURE OFFERING HELP IN AN AREA IN WHICH RTG OPERATING AGENCIES ALREADY BELIEVE THEY KNOW WHERE THEY ARE GOING. THIS REACTION DOES NOT MEAN THE THAI WOULD REJECT OUR OFFER, BUT IT HAS NOT HAD A CLEAR POSITIVE IMPACT.

3. THE SECOND PROBLEM WHICH WE MUST ADDRESS IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE UNHCR TO ANY LONG TERM PLANNING WITH REGARD TO REFUGEES. THE RTG, FOR ITS OWN REASONS, FAVORS A BILATERAL ARRANGEMENT WHICH PUTS THE US, NOT THE UNHCR, IN A POSITION OF BEARING ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL ASPECTS OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. SUCH AN APPROACH FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW IS NEITHER PRUDENT NOR POSSIBLE. OUTSIDE OF ITS ESSENTIAL ROLE IN SERVING AS A FOCUS FOR THE OVERALL INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE EFFORT, THE UNHCR ALSO MUST HAVE A MAJOR PART OF ANY LOCAL SETTLEMENT EFFORT. THE UNHCR HAS ALREADY APPROACHED THE RTG, PRESSING FOR ACTION ON LOCAL SETTLEMENT. THE MOST RECENT JAPANESE PLEDGE OF \$10 MILLION MEANS THAT THE UNHCR HAS SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL RESOURCES IT CAN COMMIT TO A LOCAL SETTLEMENT PROGRAM AND OUR \$1-2 MILLION OFFER COULD COMPLICATE UNHCR

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EFFORTS IF WE ARE NOT IN CLOSE CONNECTION.

4. GIVEN THE ABOVE CONSIDERATIONS WE BELIEVE THE BEST TACTIC AT THIS TIME IS TO WORK OUT A COORDINATED APPROACH WITH THE UNHCR, BOTH IN BANGKOK AND GENEVA, UNDER WHICH WE WOULD USE USG AND JAPANESE CONTRIBUTIONS AS CATALYSTS FOR A MAJOR EFFORT TO SECURE FURTHER PLEDGES FROM THOSE GOVERNMENTS MOST INTERESTED IN THE REFUGEE PROBLEM, E.G. AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, AND CANADA, AND THOSE THAT HAVE INDICATED PRIOR WILLINGNESS TO HELP FUND LOCAL SETTLEMENT, LIKE THE NETHERLANDS. AT THE SAME TIME WE WOULD SUPPORT UNHCR APPROACHES TO THE RTG ON LOCAL SETTLEMENT MATTERS AS WELL AS ENGAGE IN A HIGH LEVEL INFORMAL DIAOLGUE WITH THE RTG.

5. IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER AT THIS TIME, HOWEVER, THAT THE THAI HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO OUR OFFER. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE FROM INTELLIGENCE REPORTING, THE THAI HAVE THEIR OWN PLANS FOR LOCAL SETTLEMENT WHICH THEY HAVE NOT DISCUSSED WITH THE UNHCR AND ONLY TOUCHED ON INFORMALLY WITH US.

6. ANOTHER COMPLICATING FACTOR IN DISCUSSING LOCAL

SETTLEMENT WITH THE THAI WILL INEVITABLY RELATE TO THE  
NUMBERS INVOLVED. THE THAI HAVE CONSISTENTLY USED A FIGURE  
OF 20,000 FOR LOCAL SETTLEMENT IN THAILAND. THEY VIEW  
THIS NUMBER AS A RESIDUAL FIGURE AFTER OTHER COUNTRIES  
HAVE ACCEPTED MOST OF THE REFUGEES. THAI LEADERSHIP  
UNDERSTANDABLE INTERPRETED THE INDICATION THAT WE MIGHT  
TAKE AS MANY AS 15-20,000 ANNUALLY AS ASSURING A MAJOR  
OUTFLOW OF REFUGEES FROM THAILAND IN THE NEXT YEARS. BY  
THAI CALCULATIONS, OUR PROGRAM, COMBINED WITH THE FRENCH  
AND OTHERS, WOULD MEAN THAT SOME 25-30,000 REFUGEES ANNUALLY  
WOULD LEAVE THAILAND. AT THIS RATE, THE THAI UNDOUBTEDLY  
BELIEVE THAT THE REFUGEE POPULATION MAY WELL BE  
SOMEWHERE IN THE RANGE OF 20,000. CONSEQUENTLY, EFFORTS  
TO RAISE WITH THEM THE POSSIBILITY OF LOCAL SETTLEMENT OF A  
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SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER NUMBER OF REFUGEES WOULD AT THIS  
TIME ONLY BRING UP THE QUESTION OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF  
OUR INTENTIONS REGARDING OUR OWN ACCEPTANCE PROGRAM,  
AND OUR LEADERSHIP OF AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO  
INCREASE ACCEPTANCE OF REFUGEES BY OTHER COUNTRIES.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----078070 120813Z /10

R 111010Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4367  
INFO USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 13482

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7. IF THE RTG EVER COMES TO GRIPS WITH THE FACT THAT  
THE RESIDUAL REFUGEE POPULATION WILL GREATLY EXCEED

20,000, A VITAL INCENTIVE TO LOCALLY SETTLE A HIGHER NUMBER OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES WILL LIE IN WILLINGNESS OF THE U.S. AND OTHER COUNTRIES TO INCREASE ACCEPTANCES OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES TO ABSORB A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF THEM SO THAT THAILAND FEELS ABLE TO ABSORB THE BALANCE. INCREASED INTERNATIONAL INTAKE OF REFUGEES WOULD BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN FINANCIAL INCENTIVES IN MOVING THE RTG TOWARD LOCAL SETTLEMENT.

8. HAVING MADE THE ABOVE POINTS, WE BELIEVE THAT IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE THAI AND THE UNHCR ON POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO LOCAL SETTLEMENT, WE SHOULD ADOPT THE FOLLOWING APPROACHES:

A. IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE UNHCR, OFFER TO FUND FIELD STUDIES ON THE LOCATION OF COMBINED PROJECTS FOR REFUGEES AND NEEDY THAI, AS WELL AS OFFER INITIAL SEED MONEY TO GET SOME PILOT PROJECTS OFF THE GROUND. WE EXPECT THAT, THE THAI WOULD BE QUITE RESISTANT TO ANY OFFERS BY OTHERS TO BLATANTLY DESIGN THIS PROGRAM FOR

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THEM, OR TO SUPPLY LARGE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN SPECIALISTS. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY WOULD POSSIBLY BE INTERESTED IN LIMITED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM ABROAD, AS WELL AS FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PILOT PROJECTS WITHIN CURRENT RTG TERMS OF REFERENCE ON LOCAL SETTLEMENT (I.E. 20,000 REFUGEES).

B. PROBE THE POSSIBILITY OF A PILOT PROJECT WITH THE PRIMARY INITIAL FOCUS ON AGRARIAN RESETTLEMENT IN MOUNTAIN LAND IN THE NORTH. FOR INSTANCE, THE THAI MIGHT POSSIBLY BE ENCOURAGED TO PICK A LARGE HMONG CAMP FROM WHICH EMIGRATION WOULD BE LIGHT AND ESTABLISH A PILOT PROJECT TO MOVE THE POPULATION TO AGRARIAN SELF-SUFFICIENCY. THE SITE WOULD HAVE TO BE OUTSIDE OF THE LOCATION OF PRESENT CAMPS, WHICH DO NOT OFFER SUFFICIENT AGRICULTURAL LAND.

C. BY OFFERING LIMITED ASSISTANCE, ENCOURAGE THE RTG TO CONSIDER ITEGRATION OF AT LEAST SOME OF THE REFUGEES INTO THE POPULATION AS A WHOLE, NOT SIMPLY RURAL RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS. THIS IDEA MAY WELL BE A NON-STARTER BUT AT THE MINIMUM WE MAY BE ABLE TO PRESERVE THE CONTINUED EMPLOYMENT OF REFUGEES ALREADY OUTSIDE THE CAMPS.

9. IN LISTING THE ABOVE POSSIBILITES, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT IN THE END ANY SUCCESSFUL LOCAL SETTLEMENT PROGRAM MUST BE BASED ON A THAI PLAN. THE THAI HAVE NOT SEEN THEMSELVES AS MENDICANTS AND ARE SUSPICIOUS OF OUR

EFFORTS IN THE LOCAL SETTLEMENT AREA. FURTHER, WE  
MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE RTG HAS IN THE PAST MONTHS  
VIEWED ITS OWN INTERNAL PLANNING FOR LOCAL SETTLEMENT IN  
AN ESSENTIALLY SECURITY/MILITARY CONTEXT. THERE MAY WELL  
BE ASPECTS OF THAI INTERNAL PLANNING WITH WHICH WE AND  
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OTHERS WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY IN ASSOCIATING OURSELVES  
DIRECTLY. ON THE OTHER HAND, INEVITABLY WE WILL HAVE  
TO ACCEPT THAT THE THAI IN THE END WILL MAKE THEIR  
OWN DECISIONS.

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## Message Attributes

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